

they would not need any Federal dollars. This year, Congress passed a farm bill which finally took the Government out of the farming and ranching business.

The Federal Agricultural Improvement Act significantly reduces the Government's role in pricing, marketing, and planting decisions of farmers and ranchers. No longer will the Government tell farmers what and how much to plant.

Three days ago, the President held a meeting to discuss the situation now facing the cattle industry. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration has helped contribute to the troubles of cattle ranchers.

While Mother Nature is largely responsible for low carryover grain stocks, the Clinton administration announced a program which idled nearly 5 million corn acres in 1995. In other words, the administration told farmers that Washington is better at making planting decisions than they are.

Mr. President, idling 5 million corn acres is the same as idling 1 year of corn production in the State of Ohio—one of our Nation's most important Corn Belt States.

In fact, under the Republican farm bill, this year's corn plantings are expected to increase by 15 percent over last year. Farmers are finally planting for the marketplace and not for the Government.

As grain prices have risen, farmers have asked for an early out on their conservation reserve program contracts, in order to respond to a growing world demand for American grain.

It is estimated that 9 of the 36 million acres in the CRP are not environmentally sensitive. Even though the administration had the authority to respond in time for planting, they refused to do so. In fact, every time the administration has announced an early out for CRP acres, it has been too late for spring planting. Several of my colleagues have joined me in expressing concern about the European beef hormone ban. For years, there had been no action from the Clinton White House. Suddenly when beef prices hit a 10 year low, the administration files a WTO case. I am encouraged that the administration has finally taken notice of this issue.

But the administration cannot have it both ways. Administration officials have repeatedly criticized the beef industry. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has led the Clinton administration's war on the west.

The administration has raised grazing fees without input from Congress. They have locked land away from reasonable development and multiuse management. They have devalued property without compensation. Worst of all, they are trying to manage this land from Washington.

Through Government manipulation of the markets and a series of harmful decisions, the administration has worsened the crises now facing farmers and ranchers.

As I travel the country, I am reminded by farmers and ranchers that they are taxpayers too. And as taxpayers, they want less of Washington in their everyday lives.

Despite all the rhetoric from the other side of the aisle, Republicans have passed a farm bill that will prepare farmers and ranchers for the 21st century.

This farm bill provides farmers and ranchers with more flexibility, more certainty, and far less Government involvement in the agricultural industry. America's farmers and ranchers want less Government intrusion in their production and marketing decisions. It is high time the Clinton administration heeds their call.

Notwithstanding considerable Democratic opposition, this was a bipartisan bill. In fact, Senator LUGAR and Senator LEAHY stood here on the floor and managed the bill in a bipartisan way, and on the House side there was bipartisan support. That effort was led by my colleague from Kansas, Congressman PAT ROBERTS, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, who I believe will be joining other colleagues in the Senate next year.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, there is probably no more important matter that we have discussed in the last year and 3 months than the issue of the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

Last year the House of Representatives passed the balanced budget amendment by more than two-thirds vote required. We had several long weeks of debate here in the Senate before the amendment narrowly failed on a vote of 65 to 35 on March 2, 1995.

As leader, I changed my vote so that I could reconsider the matter later, which I could do now, or next week, or next month, or sometime before the year is out. So we are one vote short—that is the point I am making—in the Senate.

I continue to hope that we can resolve the balanced budget amendment issue and pass it this year.

To help us get to that goal, I have asked Senators CRAIG, HATCH, and DOMENICI to sit down with colleagues on the other side of the aisle in the coming days to see where accommodation is possible on the balanced budget amendment.

I have never thought this was a partisan issue. In fact, I have been around here for some time, and it has been discussed and supported by Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Senate over the past several years, and it is now. Many Democrats voted for the amendment last year, and we would like to have a couple more. We would like to have 8, or 10 more.

Several Senators who changed their votes last year talked about a Social Security firewall. I think there are ways to add a provision to the balanced

budget amendment that will ensure that Social Security surpluses can never again be used to mask deficit spending.

Make no mistake, the amendment will still require that the Federal budget be balanced by the year 2002. That is our promise to the American people. And I believe we can also require that, after a suitable phase-in, the Federal budget be balanced without counting the surpluses in the Social Security trust funds.

I am optimistic that we have an opportunity to pass the balanced budget amendment with broad bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate. Senator SIMON has been a leader in this important effort from the very beginning. I have directed our side to work with the Democrats and I would hope several of those Senators who changed their votes last year can come home again and support the balanced budget amendment as they have in the past.

It is no small accomplishment that all of us now agree that the budget should be balanced by the year 2002. That is a big change since last March. It is not just Republicans saying it now, but all of us—from Republicans to blue dog Democrats to the President of the United States.

I believe that in itself is good news for America. Since we all agree that we ought to do this by the year 2002, one way to underscore our determination and convince the American people we are serious is to pass the constitutional amendment for a balanced budget that will require that we do it by the year 2002.

So I do not give up hope that we can finally pass the balanced budget amendment and send it to the States for ratification. Remember that our action here is not the end of the line. The final decision about whether or not the balanced budget amendment will go into effect reverts to those outside Washington where most people would like to hope or think the decisions are made—with the States and with State legislators, with Governors, the American people, the taxpayers in each of the 50 States in America.

The Founding Fathers decided to give the ultimate authority over constitutional amendments to those who are closest to the people, the men and women who serve in State houses around the country. So if we get a two-thirds vote for a balanced budget constitutional amendment in the Senate and the House, it then does not go to the President because he has nothing to do with it; it goes to the States, where if three-fourths of the States ratify the constitutional amendment within a certain time period, it becomes part of the Constitution of the United States.

It has always seemed to me we should not be making judgments in an important area like balancing the budget; that we should bring in the States and bring in the State legislators, Republican or Democrat. They

are closer to the people. They can better reflect the views of the people. And, again, if three-fourths of the States ratify the action by Congress and ratify the amendment, it becomes part of the Constitution.

So why not go through the constitutional process that our Founding Fathers so wisely set up? There is a word for that process, and that word is democracy. That is what it is all about: Democracy. Let us let democracy work. No more excuses, no more obstacles. Eighty percent of the American people want a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. By passing the amendment, we can balance the budget by the year 2002. We can protect the Social Security trust funds, and we will have done the single most important thing we can do to ensure the Nation's economic security and to protect the American dream for our children and grandchildren.

Now, having said this, it is my hope that we can start this process sometime this next week. As I said, there is no issue more important. Eighty percent of the American people wonder why we have not done it by now. We failed by one vote. Six of my colleagues who had voted for it the year before, voted against it last year. Maybe they will come back home. We will do our best to accommodate some of the concerns that some of my colleagues have raised on the other side of the aisle, if we can work out some accommodations.

Let us take this out of politics. Let us tell the American people it is bipartisan, as it is, with Senator SIMON the leader on the Democratic side, Senator CRAIG and Senator HATCH, Senator DOMENICI, and others on this side of the aisle. So we hope that we can find a solution next week, start on this next week and maybe complete action the following week.

There is nothing more important. And I hope that we can come together, as we should, to do the right thing for the American people, the American taxpayers and our future generations.

REPEAL OF THE 4.3-CENT GAS TAX

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, finally, let me say a word with reference to the Finance Committee hearing that was held this morning on repeal of the gas tax, the 4.3-cent gas tax, which was made permanent in 1993 in the Clinton tax bill, which raised taxes by \$265 billion, the gas tax increase contributes about \$4.8 billion a year.

Not a single Republican voted for the big, big, big tax increase, the largest tax increase in the history of America. In fact, I think one of my colleagues said, "No, in the history of the world." Whatever, it was big. It has had an impact on the economy. Only once before—in 1990—did Congress ever vote to have a gas tax to pay for deficit reduction. Gas taxes were always set aside in a trust fund to build highways, bridges, and whatever.

That is a very worthy purpose, and that is why motorists and others who use fuel are prepared to pay that tax to have better roads, better highways, and better bridges. But in 1993, in the \$265 billion Clinton tax increase, which included a 4.3-cent increase in gas taxes, which was an increase of about 25 to 30 percent in the Federal gas tax, instead of dedicating the funds to bridges, highways, and whatever, it is being used for deficit reduction.

Gas prices are spiraling. They have gone up 30 cents in the State of California, for example—15 cents, 20 cents in most other States.

Will repeal of this gas tax mean the price of gas will fall? Not necessarily. If we repeal the gas tax, we are certain they are going to be 4 cents less than they were before. We should not be raising taxes. We ought to be cutting spending. The American people want us to cut spending, not raise taxes, whether it is a gas tax or some other tax on the American people, American consumers, particularly low-income Americans.

So it is my hope—in fact, on Tuesday of next week, I will introduce legislation, along with Senator GRAMM, who will be the principal sponsor, along with Members of the House, to repeal the gas tax—repeal the gas tax and remind the American people that this is the beginning, this is the beginning.

Remember, without a Republican vote, the Democrats in the House and Senate passed a \$265-billion tax increase in 1993 that President Clinton wanted. We believe this is one small step we can take. It amounts to about \$4.8 billion a year. We will find offsets, and they will not be tax increases. We will try to relieve the consumers and the motorists of at least that part of the burden on the Federal gas tax. It is going to go to the consumers. We cannot predict that prices may not rise because if there is no supply, prices will rise. But, as I have said, they will at least be 4.3 cents cheaper than they were before.

I believe there will be strong bipartisan support for repeal, and we hope to have that legislation ready and on the Senate floor in the very near future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I wish to commend the distinguished majority leader, and I shall join with him and ask if I may be a cosponsor of that legislation.

Mr. President, this is a tax put on gasoline that does not go to the improvement of the Nation's highway transportation system. When a driver moves up to the pump and pays the tax, which could be as high as 18 Federal, those taxes historically have gone to improve America's transportation—roads and bridges—but not in this case. President Clinton designed this tax to go elsewhere.

I commend the distinguished majority leader. This Clinton tax must be re-

pealed and repealed promptly. And henceforth, when you go to the gas pump, whatever tax it is, that tax must be directed toward the improvement of the transportation system. Those are the users in those automobiles and those trucks, and they are entitled to those funds to be expended for the very roads on which they must drive and work to support their families.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Virginia.

I hope to be meeting with him tomorrow on this very important issue.

WHITE HOUSE TRAVEL OFFICE REIMBURSEMENT

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate turn to the consideration of H.R. 2937 regarding the White House Travel Office.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2937) for the reimbursement of attorney fees and costs incurred by former employees of the White House Travel Office with respect to the termination of their employment in that Office on May 19, 1993.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 3952

Mr. DOLE. I send a substitute amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. DOLE] proposes an amendment numbered 3952.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN ATTORNEY FEES AND COSTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall pay, from amounts in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, such sums as are necessary to reimburse former employees of the White House Travel Office whose employment in that Office was terminated on May 19, 1993, for any attorney fees and costs they incurred with respect to that termination.

(b) VERIFICATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall pay an individual in full under subsection (a) upon submission by the individual of documentation verifying the attorney fees and costs.

(c) LIMITATION.—Payments under subsection (a) shall not include attorney fees or costs incurred with respect to any Congressional hearing or investigation into the termination of employment of the former employees of the White House Travel Office.

(d) NO INFERENCE OF LIABILITY.—Liability of the United States shall not be inferred from enactment of or payment under this section.